

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 01123

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PORG, MARR, PLO, XF, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: TUENI-LEONARD CONVERSATION
MARCH 27.

REF: STATE 77949 (EXDIS)

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING LEONARD'S PRESENTATION OF ESSENCE
OF REFTEL ON BEGIN VISIT, TUENI TURNED TO SOUTH
LEBANON -- NOTING ADF WAS NOT PERMITTING FURTHER
ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIANS TO ENTER LEBANON, THAT
LEBANON WOULD NOW REQUIRE VISAS OF ALL ARABS, AND
EXPRESSING HIS CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE ISRAELI REACTION
TO CONTINUED PALESTINIAN SHELLING. TUENI SAW FUTURE
ROLE FOR LEBANESE ARMY IN NABATIYAH, AND RAISED AGAIN
PROPOSITION OF US TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR
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LEBANESE ARMY. END SUMMARY.

2. AMB. LEONARD REVIEWED PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF REFTEL
WITH LEBANESE PERM REP TUENI LATE ON MARCH 27. TUENI
WAS APPRECIATIVE AND WAS GLAD TO LEARN DAMASCUS WOULD BE
BRIEFED ON BEGIN'S VISIT. TUENI SAID THAT ALTHOUGH
SYRIAN FM KHADDAM AND OTHER "STEADFAST" FM'S WOULD NOT

BE ATTENDING ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN CAIRO, SYRIA MIGHT BE RESPONSIVE AT THIS TIME TO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM SAUDIS OR HUSSEIN TO COME MORE INTO ALIGNMENT WITH PEACE PROCESS. THINKING OUTLOUD, TUENI ADDED THAT PERHAPS THE UN, THROUGH ITS PERFORMANCE IN LEBANON, COULD HELP BRING ABOUT RAPPROACHMENT BETWEEN SADAT AND ASSAD AT SOME FUTURE POINT. SADAT SHOULD NOT BE PUT IN POSITION OF HAVING TO ADMIT FAILURE; BUT RATHER IT WAS NECESSARY TO REPEAT EARLIER FORMULATIONS ABOUT HAVING WANTED THE SYRIANS INVOLVED ALL ALONG.

3. TUENI DESCRIBED AS LEVANTINE MENTALITY SYRIA'S APPROVAL OF TWO CONTRADICTORY COMMUNIQES ON REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE PALESTINIANS. HOWEVER, HE INDICATED THAT SINCE THE ADF COMMUNIQUE, REINFORCEMENTS AND SUPPLIES HAVE NOT IN FACT TRANSITED SYRIA. MOREOVER, TUENI SAID PRES. SARKIS TOLD HIM YESTERDAY OF A FURTHER MEASURE TO TO TAKEN IN ABOUT 10 DAYS TO CONTROL ILLEGAL ENTRIES INTO LEBANON; GOL IS PLANNING TO REQUIRE VISAS OF ALL ARABS BEFORE ARRIVAL IN LEBANON. AFTER THAT, VISAS WILL NO LONGER BE OBTAINABLE AT THE BORDER OR AIRPORT AS AT PRESENT. TUENI COMMENTED THAT IT WAS BENEFICIAL TO HAVE PM HOSS ON BOARD IN THIS ACTION.

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4. TUENI EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER WEIZMAN'S STATEMENT ON POSSIBLE ISRAELI REACTION TO CONTINUATION OF SHELLING BY PALESTINIANS. (UNNY HAS SIMILAR STATEMENT FROM COS GEN. GUR WHO REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT ISRAELI FORCES WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN IN LEBANON TWO TO THREE ADDITIONAL WEEKS IN FACE OF PALESTINIAN FIGHTING. SYG IS ISSUEING APPEAL LATE MARCH 27 ON MAINTENANCE OF CEASEFIRE.) TUENI EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING UN MOMENTUM AT THIS JUNCTURE.

5. TURNING TO LEBANESE CAPABILITIES, TUENI THOUGHT LEBANESE ARMY UNITS WOULD NOT BE DEPLOYED IN TYRE BUT COULD BE USED EFFECTIVELY IN NABATIYAH REGION. HE HOPED USG WOULD MAKE SWIFT RESPONSE TO FURTHER REQUEST FROM GEN. KHOURY FOR RIFLES AND OTHER ARMS. TUENI THEN MENTIONED AGAIN HIS PROPOSAL THAT US OFFER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LEBANESE ARMY, PARTLY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST US UNIFORMS SOULD PROVIDE AND PARTLY TO "PROD KHOURY". (PROTECT TUENI).

6. ON SPECULATIVE SIDE, TUENI WONDERED WHETHER ISRAELI FAILURE TO KNOCK OUT PALESTINIAN STRONGHOLDS

IN TYRE, NABATIYAH AND BEAUFORT CASTLE WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FUTURE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE STRIKES IN SOUTH LEBANON. IN EXPLAINING SYRIA'S POSITION ON UNIFIL'S STAYING OUTSIDE OF TYRE, TUENI CONJECTURED LIBYA, IRAQ, OR THE PLO MAY HAVE PRESSURED ASSAD. TUENI SAID THAT AFTER THE ARAB AMBASSADORS CALLED ON WALDHEIM ON MARCH 24, TUENI AND WALDHEIM SPOKE ON THE PHONE DURING WHICH TUENI CLARIFIED THAT LEBANON INDEED FAVORED UNIFIL'S PRESENCE IN TYRE. TO LEONARD'S QUERY ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LEBANESE AND SYRIAN POSITION, TUENI SHRUGGED THAT WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THE SYRIAN

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POSITION TOO LITERALLY. SYRIA WANTS TO KEEP THE PALESTINIANS STRONG (AND THUS BE ABLE TO PLAY A STRONG CARD IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS) BUT NOT SO STRONG AS TO BECOME INDEPENDENT. TUENI NOTED THAT PALESTINIANS ARE BOASTING OF THEIR VICTORY AGAINST ISRAEL'S INVASION; SYRIA COULD PERHAPS TAKE PALESTINIANS DOWN A NOTCH IN TERMS OF PALESTINIAN MILITARY STRENGTH AT THIS TIME, BUT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD NEED SOME COMPENSATING POLITICAL GESTURE FROM THE WEST.
LEONARD

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